

Bridging knowledge for Transboundary Water Cooperation

Informing Exchange in the Indus Basin.....

The Indus, one of the largest transboundary rivers in the world, is a complex system ranging from high-altitude glaciers in the Himalayas to vast agricultural plains reaching down to the Arabian Sea. It also supplies water to the largest contiguous irrigation system in the world. Encompassing parts of Afghanistan, China, India and Pakistan, the entire Indus River Basin supports a population of some 300 million people, the vast majority of which live in Pakistan. From recent interviews conducted by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) with stakeholders across the basin, it emerged that there was a lack of wider understating of changes taking place in the basin, including challenges related to climate change and other 'multiplier' issues such as environmental variability and vulnerability, and the impacts of rapid demographic change.

A basin which has complex geopolitics, these challenges continue to hinder development potential for the basin population, exacerbating social vulnerabilities and risks from natural and man-made hazards. A prevailing 'trust deficit' exists between riparian countries, in part fueled by a fragmented knowledge environment and lack of a 'common core' of accessible scientific information, which can form the basis for rational public debate and sound decision making.

To address this identified gap, IWMI developed an Indus Basin Knowledge Platform (IBKP) in late 2016. Forming a one-stop knowledge portal to support public access to scattered but key information on the Indus River Basin, our fundamental concern (and conviction) is that easier access to high quality knowledge is a necessary – though admittedly not a sufficient – condition to improving the capacity of those tasked with understanding, responding to (and reporting on) the key development challenges in the basin, be they agricultural development, managing resource scarcity (and over-abundance in relation to flooding) and assessing how best to respond rationally and equitably to the impacts of future climate change on the 'third pole' in the Himalayas to sea level rise on the Indus Delta, and the huge surface water and groundwater resources in between. Our premise is that informed decision making is a key starting point for more successful cooperation at all levels, from intra-national to international transboundary and wider regional levels.

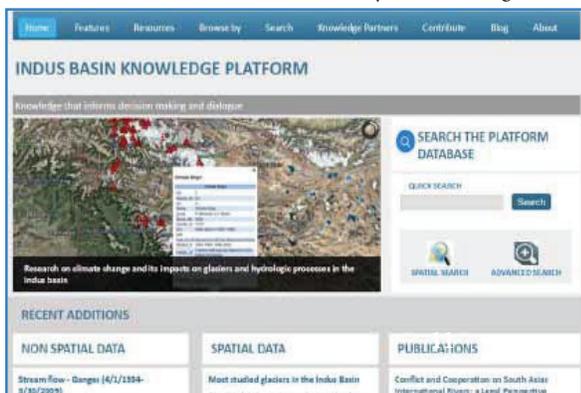


Fig. 1: The Indus Basin Knowledge Platform Homepage

Hosted by IWMI (www.iwmi.org), IBKP (www.indusbasin.org) is explicitly designed for policy makers, development practitioners, academics, civil society organizations, the media and others. A key feature of IBKP is the broad range of data and other forms of information that is made available, allowing users to establish more multi-dimensional understandings of key development challenges in the basin, including, for instance, the relationship between climate change and potential for impacting future flows, on population growth and demand for the resource, and on environmental impacts of growing use on water quality issues. To do this, IBKP brings together material

from multiple disciplines, including spatial and time series biophysical datasets and maps, social science data, academic publications and policies, strategies and legal instruments from local analyses to regional scale datasets. Also included, where relevant, access to different types of media from blogposts to video, whilst continuing all the time to strive for neutrality and impartiality given the acknowledged challenge of avoiding any form of political or geographic bias. IBKP also provides a dedicated space for partners and others to showcase past or ongoing initiatives, and/or to inform others of planned activities.

Visitors to IBKP can access information through different search options from broad searches to more specific information needs on key topics and/or geographic locations within the basin. Search results are broken down by tab into a range of information types, from datasets to publications and multi-media. Biophysical and socioeconomic data are directly downloadable where intellectual property rights allow for this. Where restrictions to direct access apply, the user is directed to the source site or other location.

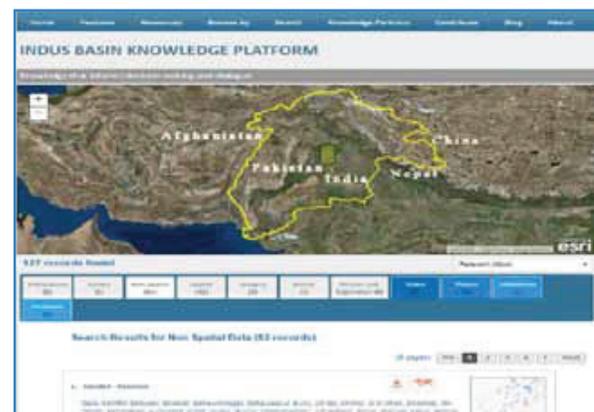


Fig. 2: The categorized display of search results

More information on IWMI's work on the Indus

IBKP is part of a program titled 'Informing change in the Indus Basin' funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). Led by IWMI, the program supports cooperation and improved decision making in the Indus Basin. It does this through improving the way knowledge is managed and shared in the basin, supporting new forms of analysis and enhancing dialogue at different levels and through different channels across the basin.

For further information on IBKP and to become part of this exciting initiative, email Indus.IWMI@cgiar.org or visit the website (www.indusbasin.org).

Read more on IBKP: <http://scroll.in/article/822729/can-a-new-knowledge-platform-save-the-indus-basin>.

IBKP was launched for feedback and comment during World Water Week in Stockholm and at the International Rivers Symposium in Delhi, both in September 2016. The IBKP management team is continuously looking to add other interested knowledge partners to the growing constituency of individuals and institutions interested in the goals and objectives of providing accessible, impartial access to key knowledge on this critical and unique river system.

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